

Date: May 14, 2025

To: TANF WPAC

From: Department of Children and Families

Re: Quarter Two TANF Work Programs Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Present (In-person): Alex Eisold, TMJ/Equus; Carlyle Outten, AWWI W-2; Michelle Szabrowicz, W-2/FSC; Patara Horn, DCF; Tim Schindler, W-2, UMOS; Sarah Kaminski, W-2/Equus

Present (Virtually): Maudwella Kirkendoll, Community Advocates; Nicole Hagen, ROSS W-2; Jody Conner, WRI W-2; Lisa Omen FSC W-2; Connie Chesnik, DCF.

Absent: Larry Dupuis, Legal Action; Nikia Morton Community Action; Autumn Morgan, W-2/MAXIMUS; Gina Brown, W-2/WCI; Jackie Schwartz, TJ/WRI.

Invited Guests: Linda Richardson, DCF; Anna Sainsbury, DCF; Sally Higgins DCF; Dave Turk DCF; Theresa Peirce, WCI; Rachel Zietlow, Maximus.

Call to Order and Welcome

Connie Chesnik stated that she is attending the meeting from home for medical reasons and will need to leave at 10:00am for another meeting. She recently read the minutes from the last WPAC meeting and saw that it fulfilled the vision of bringing upper management from agencies and partners across the state.

Federal Update

Patara Horn stated that she learned a lot from the previous meeting discussion and will make sure that future meetings are applicable to all programs funded by TANF. She provided a funding update and stated there is no mention of TANF or the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) in the congressional budget reconciliation bill, but the TANF Reorganization Bill was introduced on May 13, 2025, and she is still looking through the text. Other states have reported that the TANF Contingency Fund will be cut, but Wisconsin did not apply for it. Wisconsin is currently in the middle of the state budget cycle and it is unclear what effect any federal funding cuts will have. Current funding is approved through September 30, 2025.

Federal agencies will be reorganizing their regional coverage. Five regional offices have closed and it is not clear if there will still be 10 regions covered by the remaining five offices. Different federal agencies may have different coverage. Patara will ask at the next quarterly meeting with federal partners on Thursday, May 15, 2025.

BWF will share additional federal and state budget information with partners as it becomes available.

Connie stated that she received an update on the Reconciliation Bill from a national organization that she belongs to. The House Ways and Means Subcommittee meeting is ongoing, but so far neither TANF nor SSBG has been slated for funding cuts. However, significant cuts have been proposed for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid. The bill will go to the House Rules Committee, where additional cuts are likely to be proposed. There are several additional steps until the bill reaches the House floor and the Senate, so there is still uncertainty.

Patara stated that there is a lot of national-level support for workforce development and apprenticeship programs, which may result in increased funding.

Michelle Szabrowicz asked how any potential Medicaid work requirement will affect TANF, if at all.

- Patara stated that W-2 participants will be affected if the work requirements are not aligned. The people making the rules may not be aware of that. National partners are advocating for work requirement alignments.
- Connie stated that there will be a significant increase in the number of people without access to food or health care, which may increase the number of people who turn to W-2 for help.

Linda Richardson asked the partner agencies about their lobbying efforts on behalf of TANF or other work programs.

- Carlyle Outten stated that Dr. Bowes at America Works is working on it.
- Rachel Zeitlow stated that Maximus is following events at the federal level, talking about doing more with less, and looking into ways of stepping in where state and federal governments are not aligning.

Sarah Kaminski asked if the federal budget will be included as an agenda item in the monthly W-2 contractors' meetings going forward.

- Anna Sainsbury stated that it can be.
- Patara stated that it will be included as part of the Director's Update.

TANF Funding Contingency Plan

Linda stated that DCF is looking at current funding sources and coming up with plans to address potential cuts. She asked the partner agencies what they are doing for contingency planning, what they need from DCF, and what questions they have.

- Maximus is looking at existing structures and potential changes (e.g., combining positions) to better serve customers and respond to increased demand for specific services (e.g., refugee services in Milwaukee). Specific steps include:
 - Co-enrolling clients into multiple programs;
 - Bringing staff from other programs on-site; and
 - Working with community partners.



- WCI is watching and waiting to see what will happen at both the federal and state levels and cannot do as much contingency planning as they would like due to the uncertainty. Key federal issues include:
 - Budget reconciliation;
 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding; and
 - Recommendations regarding different workforce programs.

WCI foster grandparent and healthcare navigator programs have already been impacted by funding cuts.

- AWWI is looking to expand current services and partner with vendors so that the agency does not have to incur the full expense. AWWI is also looking at ways of consolidating training and teaming up with other W-2 agencies to negotiate collectively with training providers to keep costs down. AWWI has cross-trained 95% of staff to serve as FEPs if needed. AWWI does not yet have a plan for Medicaid cutbacks.

Carlyle identified food and mental health as major concerns for the community. He is talking to an alderman and the mayor to obtain funding for community gardens. AWWI is looking for partnerships with funded organizations who can provide mental health resources. AWWI is turning the community into first responders and teaching them how to heal.

- WRI is taking a watch and see approach and hoping they will have enough time to be proactive instead of reactive on issues. WRI funding is stable through June 2026. WRI is rightsizing resources, including closing two offices that can be served by nearby locations and having fewer positions. The partnership with the local resettlement agency resulted in WRI using their own funding to support newly arrived refugees.
- FSC is concerned about funding cuts and resulting staffing cuts. Refugee funding has decreased. WIOA funding is down because it is tied to unemployment, which is lower in Wisconsin than in other states. FSC is looking to downsize office space and offer client resources, such as trainings and support groups, virtually. Caseloads could increase due to a combination of staffing cuts and lack of community resources. DCF can help by aligning paperwork with other state agencies, decreasing administrative burden for case managers, and recognizing the W-2 agencies' resource limitations.
- UMOS is monitoring the funding situation and its impact on programs. Some programs had to be shut down as a result of executive orders. CSBG funding may be cut. Local food pantries have cut back on services, and UMOS' self-funded food pantry has seen an increase in demand. UMOS is looking to expand partnerships with existing partners to better help clients. One issue is that UMOS cannot be a program provider if it does not charge the other agency for its services.
- In addition to watching and waiting, Ross is taking or has taken the following steps:
 - Met with their alderwoman to find other local resources;
 - Joined the Bid Committee;
 - Partnering with a local food pantry; and
 - Looking for training providers that offer more than one training for a fair price.
- Equus is focusing on:

- Finding out what resources are available so the agency can provide a concierge style of service;
- Implementing the whole family approach to ensure that participants' children also receive necessary services; and
- Advocating for their programs by emphasizing workforce development in local communities.

The Equus TJ/TMJ contingency plan will depend on the size of cuts. Wage subsidies or the job transition stipend may need to be reduced. The overall service level may become less efficient and effective. The caseload ratio is already above the contract recommendation and is expected to increase. One positive is that TJ and TMJ have a good community partnership network.

- The WRI TJ program also has record caseloads and is seeing an increase in homelessness and individuals needing help with basic necessities such as rent, utilities, clothing, and hygiene items. Contingency plan steps include:
 - Reducing job transition stipends;
 - Putting a cap on wage subsidies;
 - Looking closer at co-enrolling participants into FSET, W-2, and WIOA;
 - Reaching out to form new partnerships with other entities in the community; and
 - Creating an online application to reduce caseworkers' workload and help prevent staff burnout.

Linda asked if any agencies have reached out to new employers or other partners or thought about a new way of providing services.

- AWWI is negotiating with a transportation organization to drive clients to higher-paying jobs located further away. This is something that all Milwaukee agencies could participate in, bringing down costs. Carlyle will talk about this at the next Milwaukee W-2 agency directors' meeting.
- Jackie Schwartz talked about WRI's partnership with county jails and looking into what they do to support released individuals. Some jails have resources and connections that the agency did not know about, while others do not.

Linda asked if any agencies are working with healthcare systems.

- Equus has a partnership with local hospitals. The agency's community advocates go out to the hospitals, instead of the hospitals sending case managers to the agency as before.
- AWWI is working with Children's Hospital to set up a prenatal program. AWWI also talked to an alderman about having space in the community to set up a program for noncustodial parents (NCPs).

State Budget

Connie and Patara were unable to provide an update on the state budget because they were attending another meeting. Anna instructed the agencies to submit state budget questions to her via email.

Partner Training Team (PTT) Training – Whole Family Approach

Sally Hilsgen provided an overview of the PTT whole family case management called Building Stronger Families Together. Unlike previous models, where separate programs were provided for parents and children, whole family case management is a holistic approach that works under the idea that all family members are interconnected. It includes four core principles:

- Family-centered – Families know what they need and what they are looking for.
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) – There is no standard family makeup in Wisconsin or the United States. This means that the families served by W-2 have diverse needs.
- Trauma-Informed
- Tailored support – Looking at a family’s specific needs instead of using a “cookie cutter” approach.

The webinar also provides the following information to highlight the importance of the whole family case management approach:

- Statistics about different aspects of families’ lives (education level, employment, health concerns, etc.);
- Key services and supports, and how to incorporate them into day-to-day case management;
- Building connections with other programs in the community;
- Community engagement/education – how to share information about the W-2 program;
- The importance of resource banks where families can get help from multiple programs in one location;
- Creating a plan with measurable outcomes; and
- Engagement, empowerment, and motivational interviewing.

Sally asked if attendees have any questions. No attendees had questions.

Jody Conner stated that the training looks very good.

Closing

Linda asked about upcoming agency events.

- UMOS will hold a job fair on Friday, May 16. Tim Schindler will be presenting GEDs in an upcoming graduation ceremony.
- AWWI is sponsoring a basketball tournament as an outreach event to recruit NCPs.
 - Linda stated that one proposed new TANF reporting requirement is to describe how the state will engage low-income NCPs who owe child support. This would be pertinent to the Child Support Liaison program.
- Anna stated that the May 2025 W-2 Contractors’ Meeting will include a presentation from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

Lauren Frederick encouraged the agencies to submit agenda topics for future WPAC meetings.

Linda encouraged the agencies to keep an eye on the state budget and continue lobbying on behalf of the programs they provide.



Carlyle suggested a discussion topic for a future meeting – how are program participants paying for rent when they receive \$653 per month, and how can the agencies help them turn their side hustle into a legitimate job?

Lauren thanked everyone for attending and stated that the meeting minutes will be distributed prior to the next meeting.